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Early History of the Sudan

Author(s): E. W. B.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Early History of the Sudan.

MAY I point out, with reference to your notice in the May *Journal* of M. de la Roncière's interesting account of a Genoese traveller's visit to Tuat in 1447, that, in the absence of further evidence, it is very doubtful whether *Sagoto* can be identified with Sokoto, for the latter town was built only in the early years of the nineteenth century, on a site chosen by the Fulani jihadi Usuman dan Fodio (see Barth, 'Travels and Discoveries,' 1857, vol. 4, p. 527). There is, I believe, no evidence that the Sokoto of Usuman was preceded by a town of any size or note. Probably it was a barren site. The town to-day has a comparatively modern aspect, and shows none of those signs of age which characterize such towns as Kano and Zaria.

E. W. B.

[The writer is no doubt justified in assigning a comparatively modern origin to the present town of Sokoto, and did Malfante's mention of *Sagoto* stand alone the similarity of names might be thought a mere coincidence. But that the name was older than Dan Fodio's time as a designation of some part of the Hausa domain seems confirmed by its occurrence in variant form, even before Malfante, in the "Catalan" map of 1375. Here, following in due course after Tenbuch (Timbuktu), Geugeu (Gao or Gogo), and Mayma (? Niamey), we have *Zogde* as the name of a state or city on the left side of the Niger's course, just where the modern Sokoto occurs. The point seems to deserve further investigation.]

Stone Circles in Arabia.

In Mr. Philby's paper published in the *Journal* for March there are one or two matters referred to which much demand the future attention of travellers in eastern Arabia. One is the "stone circles," which Dr. Hogarth believes to be the remains of tumuli, the small stuff piled on the stone foundations having been washed away. He thinks they may be pre-Arab remains. Apparently he is unaware of the existence of the Phœnician tumuli, or tombs, in the Bahrein Islands, which are almost due north-east of Khardj, with which they are connected by the great highway which must once have been a trade route from the historic port of Gerrha—older than Abraham's time. These Phœnician tumuli (opened by Durand or by Bent) are circular mounds of what may once have been soft *débris*, but which is now as hard almost as concrete covering the huge stone blocks which form the actual tombs. The puzzle to me was the nature of those blocks. I don't know now where they could have come from, but I believe them to have been limestone. An examination of the Khardj blocks might help to solve the difficulty. The Persians have occupied south-eastern Arabia intermittently from very early times, but I am doubtful about Riadh. The Carmathians (a Persian schismatic sect) actually sacked and looted Mecca in the sixteenth century, and the Persians were not actually cleared out of Oman till the middle of the eighteenth century; but they never seem to have had much hold on northern Arabia. The constant movement that existed in the early centuries of our era between Yemen and Oman and the size of the expeditions (tribal and military) which passed across the central desert sufficiently prove that there were ways and routes available of